

Summary of Curriculum for Clergy reporting of Suspected Child Abuse

Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church

July 9, 2013

The following includes the text and/or outline of presentations for a curriculum developed to support the Virginia Conference policy regarding the reporting of suspected child abuse. It is accompanied by a video segments and is constructed to be completed in 3 hours.

Participants are expected to complete prior to arriving, "Child Abuse and Neglect: Recognizing, Reporting and Responding for Educators." A link to the side is found at the Virginia CPS website or directly at http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps/mandated_reporters/cws5691/index.html

The Goal of the training is to:

- Recognize signs of child abuse and neglect
- Understand the role as United Methodist spiritual leaders in reporting suspected child abuse and neglect
- Learn about resources helpful in both reporting of suspected abuse & neglect and resources available when an incident occurs in the church
- Encourage development of "safe sanctuary" policy and procedures in the congregations. child

A BRIEF OUTLINE

Orientation & pretest

Worship

Introduction

- UM Heritage on the care of the most vulnerable
- Myths about reporting suspected child abuse and neglect
 - It doesn't happen here
- Video greeting from the bishop
- Recent statistics on Child Abuse in Virginia
- Church policy on violation of confidential communication and commitment to report suspected child abuse and neglect
 - *"All clergy of The United Methodist Church are charged to maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences, except in the cases of suspected child abuse or neglect or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law. (2004 Book of Discipline ¶1341.5)"*
- Virginia law on mandated reporters

Recognizing the Signs of suspected child abuse

Overview of some basic types of child abuse?

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual abuse

Small group conversation with case studies on each area of abuse/neglect

Video segment from youth at United Methodist Family Services

The video is of a 17 year-old woman who has been a client of UMFS. She lives with her mother and was systematically tortured. She reported the abuse to the police but the report was not followed up as the officer taking the report was a friend of the abuser. She finally returned to local law enforcement and the complaint was taken. She hopes her participation in the training via the video will aid others who have endured what she has been through.

How to work with the local child protection and social service agencies

(A representative from the local CPS unit usually provides the resourcing for this part of the workshop)

Focus of DSS / CPS Presentation includes some of the following questions:

- CPS vs. law enforcement – what are the cases that DSS/CPS will handle and which are in the jurisdiction of law enforcement?
- How does CPS work? What is the local office process once a suspicion of child abuse concern is made?
- What can a local pastor expect from the CPS office in terms of feedback once a report is made?

The presentation will also cover:

A history of CPS work *One Track Investigations* from 1975 until 2000 and *The Differential Response System* from 2000. They will cover when there's an investigation and how a family assessment response is done along with their time constraints. The workshop will look at how to discern what to report.

Pastoral Care Perspectives

This part focuses on the pastoral caregiver and how this spiritual leader must show primary concern for the most vulnerable (i.e. an abused child). But in doing so, the minister must also care for the community and the abuser. The role of the spiritual care provider for the child and family involves being compassionate, trustworthy, accessible and assertive.

Caring for the community and caring for the suspected abuser is also a part of the pastoral role. Regarding care for the suspected abuser, leaders are reminded that the abuser is also a child of God in need of God's grace. Many adult abusers were victims of abuse in their childhood. When suspected abuse is investigated, it is a time of crisis in the life of the abuser. *Crises in one's life are times of fertile possibility for change and growth.* Leaders are also reminded that if they are unable to offer care themselves, they are still obligated to refer to a colleague who can.

Denominational Resources for clergy during incidents of abuse/neglect

Concluding small group conversations – scenario based

Closing video word from Bishop

Closing Worship

Recommended Resources for Safe Sanctuaries

- *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church* by Joy Thornburg Melton (Discipleship Resources) 2008
- *Safe Sanctuaries for Children and Youth DVD: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church* by Joy Thornburg Melton
Following up on her two bestselling Safe Sanctuaries manuals (Children and Youth), Joy Thornburg Melton now offers a DVD/video to use in training and in raising awareness in your congregation. The three key segments address the why and how of developing and implementing a policy to reduce the risk of abuse in your church, and provide a Reporting and Response Plan to implement in the event of an incident. The DVD also includes an interview with Joy, stories from her experience working with churches, and forms.
- *Safe Sanctuaries for Ministers: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth*, Discipleship Resources, 2009
Melton understands the need to educate clergy concerning basics of ethical practice within their particular leadership role in the church. She also helps clergy become aware of the potential traps they face: isolation, improper self-care, and lack of accountability. Safe Sanctuaries for Ministers explores three large areas of special concern to clergy.
 - *Counseling and the potential improprieties within the counseling relationship
 - *Finances and the potential improprieties related to church finance
 - *Sexuality and potential for sexual misconduct. Melton writes not only for clergy, but also for those who work with pastors, such as Staff-Parrish Relations Committees or Church Relations Committees
- *Safe Sanctuaries - Older Adults: The Church Responds to Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of Older Adults* by Joy Thornburg Melton Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2012

The above are available through www.Cokesbury.com or www.Amazon.com

Other Safe Sanctuaries information

- Many annual conferences have Safe Sanctuary policies – googling “safe sanctuaries” will produce many of the annual conference websites. One example in Virginia is <http://www.vaumc.org/Page.aspx?pid=702> (Virginia United Methodist Safe Sanctuaries site) which also has links to other good sites regarding safe sanctuary policies.

**Policy Recommendation regarding
clergy and the reporting of suspected abuse or neglect**
Approved, Virginia Annual Conference – June, 2005

Each year in the Commonwealth of Virginia, over 48,000 children are reported for suspected abuse or neglect.* Since 1996 the Council of Bishops' Initiative for Children and Poverty has urged all United Methodist churches to work toward a more just world for children, bearing responsibility for their spiritual and physical welfare. Our social principles state, "We recognize that family violence and abuse in all its forms - verbal, psychological, physical, sexual - is detrimental to the covenant of the human community. . ."¹

One aspect of fulfilling our baptismal promise to care for children means to "surround these persons with a community of love and forgiveness..."² Our social principles on the rights of children remind us that "in particular, children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse."³ Surrounding our children means to provide safe sanctuaries where they can be loved and nurtured in the faith.

Parishioners often confide in clergy and religious professionals. While clergy are expected to maintain such confidences, their responsibility goes beyond the pastor-penitent relationship to that of the broader community, especially to those whose voice is compromised by age and/or abuse or neglect. The 2004 General Conference took note of this responsibility when they adopted the statement:

"All clergy of The United Methodist Church are charged to maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences, except in the cases of suspected child abuse or neglect or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law. (2004 Book of Discipline ¶341.5)"

Currently, clergy in the Commonwealth of Virginia are not mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. However, when United Methodist clergy of the Virginia Conference become aware of suspected child abuse or neglect, the conference expects that the clergy or religious professional will insure that a report to Child Protective Services will be made. Clergy can make reports themselves, anonymously if desired. Such a report need not prove that abuse or neglect has taken place -- that is the responsibility of local Child Protective Services. Reports may be made to Virginia's Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 800-522-7096.

Clergy and religious professionals are expected to participate in training provided regarding the implementation of this policy through the oversight of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Further, clergy will ensure training of volunteers, church staff and adjunct ministry staff relating to children and youth programs in his or her place of ministry. Clergy may need also to maintain an active role in advocacy for the child and their family who are the concern for the reporting.

¹ ¶161.H Family Violence and Abuse, 2004 Book of Discipline

² The Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Hymnal

³ ¶162.C on Rights of Children, 2004 Book of Discipline

Code of Virginia (with emphasis added) - Legislative Information System 2013

§ 63.2-1509. Requirement that certain injuries to children be reported by physicians, nurses, teachers, etc.; penalty for failure to report.

A. The following persons who, in their professional or official capacity, have reason to suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child, shall report the matter immediately to the local department of the county or city wherein the child resides or wherein the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred or to the Department's toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline:

1. Any person licensed to practice medicine or any of the healing arts;
2. Any hospital resident or intern, and any person employed in the nursing profession;
3. Any person employed as a social worker;
4. Any probation officer;
5. Any teacher or other person employed in a public or private school, kindergarten or nursery school;
6. Any person providing full-time or part-time child care for pay on a regularly planned basis;
7. Any mental health professional;
8. Any law-enforcement officer or animal control officer;
9. Any mediator eligible to receive court referrals pursuant to § [8.01-576.8](#);
10. Any professional staff person, not previously enumerated, employed by a private or state-operated hospital, institution or facility to which children have been committed or where children have been placed for care and treatment;
11. Any person 18 years of age or older associated with or employed by any public or private organization responsible for the care, custody or control of children;
12. Any person who is designated a court-appointed special advocate pursuant to Article 5 (§ [9.1-151](#) et seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title 9.1;
- 13. Any person 18 years of age or older who has received training approved by the Department of Social Services for the purposes of recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect;**
14. Any person employed by a local department as defined in § [63.2-100](#) who determines eligibility for public assistance;
15. Any emergency medical services provider certified by the Board of Health pursuant to § [32.1-111.5](#), unless such provider immediately reports the matter directly to the attending physician at the hospital to which the child is transported, who shall make such report forthwith;
16. Any athletic coach, director or other person 18 years of age or older employed by or volunteering with a private sports organization or team;
17. Administrators or employees 18 years of age or older of public or private day camps, youth centers and youth recreation programs; and
18. Any person employed by a public or private institution of higher education other than an attorney who is employed by a public or private institution of higher education as it relates to information gained in the course of providing legal representation to a client.

This subsection shall not apply to any regular minister, priest, rabbi, imam, or duly accredited practitioner of any religious organization or denomination usually referred to as a church as it relates to

(i) information required by the doctrine of the religious organization or denomination to be kept in a confidential manner or (ii) information that would be subject to § [8.01-400](#) or [19.2-271.3](#) if offered as evidence in court.

(Section removed)

C. Any person who makes a report or provides records or information pursuant to subsection A or who testifies in any judicial proceeding arising from such report, records, or information shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability or administrative penalty or sanction on account of such report, records, information, or testimony, unless such person acted in bad faith or with malicious purpose.

D. Any person required to file a report pursuant to this section who fails to do so as soon as possible, but not longer than 24 hours after having reason to suspect a reportable offense of child abuse or neglect, shall be fined not more than \$500 for the first failure and for any subsequent failures not less than \$1,000. In cases evidencing acts of rape, sodomy, or object sexual penetration as defined in Article 7 (§ [18.2-61](#) et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 18.2, a person who knowingly and intentionally fails to make the report required pursuant to this section shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

E. No person shall be required to make a report pursuant to this section if the person has actual knowledge that the same matter has already been reported to the local department or the Department's toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline.

(1975, c. 341, § 63.1-248.3; 1976, c. 348; 1978, c. 747; 1993, c. 443; 1994, c. [840](#); 1995, c. [810](#); 1998, cc. [704](#), [716](#); 1999, c. [606](#); 2000, c. [500](#); 2001, c. [853](#); 2002, cc. [747](#), [860](#); 2006, cc. [530](#), [801](#); 2008, cc. [43](#), [268](#); 2012, cc. [391](#), [504](#), [640](#), [698](#), [728](#), [740](#), [815](#); 2013, cc. [72](#), [331](#).)

When initially adopted in 2006, the bill also contained:

That the Department of Social Services shall create or approve training required by subdivision A 13 of § 63.2-1509 for persons who wish to receive it, at their own expense, in recognizing and reporting suspected child abuse and neglect.